

a first exhaust passageway connected to said internal combustion engine and further to a first position of said flow direction switching means[:];

a second exhaust passageway communicating with the atmospheric air and further to a second port of said flow direction switching means;

a third exhaust passageway connected to one side of said exhaust gas purifying means and further to a third port of said flow direction switching means; and

a fourth exhaust passageway connected to the other side of said exhaust gas purifying means and further to a fourth port of said flow direction switching means,

wherein said flow direction switching means can be switched over to a first position for permitting the exhaust gas to flow in a direction through said exhaust gas purifying means by connecting the first port to the third port and connecting the second port to the fourth port, [and] to a second position for permitting the exhaust gas to flow in a direction opposite to the first direction through said exhaust gas purifying means by connecting the first port to the fourth port and connecting the second port to the third port, and to a third position in which the first port is connectable to the second port.

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3. (Once amended) An exhaust emission control system of an internal combustion engine according to claim 2 [1], wherein said exhaust gas purifying means is an NO<sub>x</sub> storage-reduction catalyst for absorbing NO<sub>x</sub> when an air/fuel ratio of the inflow exhaust gas is lean, and desorbing NO<sub>x</sub> absorbed thereto when a concentration of oxygen in the inflow exhaust gas decreases.

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13. (Once amended), An exhaust emission control system of an internal combustion engine according to claim 2 [1], wherein lengths of said third exhaust passageway and of said fourth exhaust passageway are set so that a distance from said internal combustion engine to said exhaust gas purifying means becomes different by switching over said flow direction switching means to the first position or the second position.

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23. (Once amended), An exhaust emission control system of an internal combustion engine according to claim 2 [1], wherein said exhaust gas purifying means is a catalyst,

any one of said third exhaust passageway and of said fourth exhaust passageway is provided with an HC adsorbing agent for adsorbing hydro carbon, and

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said flow direction switching means is switched over to select a flow path on which said catalyst is positioned more upstream than said HC adsorbing agent when the temperature of the exhaust gas or of said HC adsorbing agent is in a temperature region where said HC adsorbing agent adsorbs the hydro carbon, and to select a flow path on which said HC adsorbing agent is positioned more upstream than said catalyst when the temperature of the exhaust gas or of said HC adsorbing agent is in a temperature region where said HC adsorbing agent desorbs the hydro carbon.

#### REMARKS

Claims 20-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite for recitation of the limitation "the third position" without sufficient antecedent basis. Claims 1 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,072,457 to Bloch ("Bloch"). Claims 2, 4-19 and 23 stand objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but were identified as allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of their respective base and intervening claims. Claims 20-22 were also identified as allowable if rewritten to overcome the § 112, second paragraph rejections and to include all of the limitations of their respective base and intervening claims.

The Applicants have carefully reviewed the July 31, 2000 Office Action, and respectfully submits the foregoing amendments and the following remarks in response thereto. The Applicants are grateful for the Examiner's indication that claims 2, 4-19 and 23 are allowable and that claims 20-22 would be allowable if the § 112, second paragraph rejections are overcome.

In response to the Examiner's comments, the Applicants have amended claim 2 to incorporate the limitations of claim 1, and have amended claims 3, 13 and 23 to change their dependence from claim 1 to claim 2. These amendments render moot the § 102(b) rejection of claim 1 as anticipated by Bloch. Further, because claim 3 now depends from allowable claim 2, the § 102(b) rejection of claim 3 is also moot. Finally, because claims 20-22 depend from claim 2 (through intervening claim 3), antecedent basis for the limitation "the third